

CALFED
BAY-DELTA
PROGRAM

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January 16, 1998

The Honorable Richard W. Pombo
Member of Congress
1519 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Pombo:

I have received a copy of your December 22, 1997 letter to Representative Bob Livingston, Chair of the House Committee on Appropriations, regarding reprogramming of USACOE funds to support their work efforts on the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. In this letter you express several concerns about the Program. I am attempting to schedule a meeting with you and your staff to discuss the CALFED Program and your specific concerns, but I believe it is important to respond to some of the issues raised in your letter.

I am pleased that you support the Program's goal of finding solutions to Bay-Delta water management issues that are acceptable to agricultural, urban, and environmental stakeholders. I believe you will agree that successful completion of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program will benefit all of California. We are working to ensure that the CALFED Bay-Delta Program is balanced in order to provide those benefits for all stakeholders.

Your concerns over methods to achieve that goal are welcome. As you note, several actions currently under consideration by the CALFED Program include levee improvements. Habitat restoration, water quality improvement (e.g., selenium reduction), and water facilities would require agricultural land conversion. It is important to note that these actions collectively are intended to improve overall conditions for California agriculture even though there will be localized land conversion impacts. In many ways these conversion impacts can be seen as investments. That is, land converted to a larger levee results in greater protection of the adjacent land and habitat conversion is designed to alleviate ESA and other environmental conflicts currently facing Central Valley agricultural water users. Even so, we are taking steps to ensure that those impacts are minimized. For example, our levee stability efforts are being combined with habitat creation, as shown in the enclosed diagrams, to achieve multiple benefits with as small an impact on agricultural land as possible.

CALFED Agencies

California The Resources Agency
Department of Fish and Game
Department of Water Resources
California Environmental Protection Agency
State Water Resources Control Board

Federal Environmental Protection Agency
Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Department of Commerce
National Marine Fisheries Service

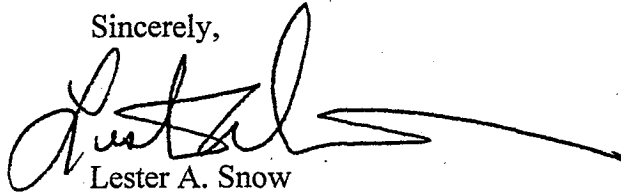
The Honorable Richard W. Pombo
January 16, 1998
Page Two

The ability to acquire land and water resources is critical to successful implementation of an ecosystem restoration program, which will be essential to achieving our goal of finding solutions that are agreeable to all stakeholder groups. We are carefully designing CALFED's land acquisition plans to minimize economic disruption and dislocation. However, recognizing the importance of minimizing impacts on prime agricultural land as raised by you and others, CALFED intends to develop a broader policy on prime agricultural land preservation.

Your letter also observes that CALFED plans do not contain a water storage element. CALFED has consistently reviewed a range of storage enhancement from zero to 6.0 MAF. In mid-December, CALFED staff presented three alternative plans to the Bay-Delta Advisory Council. These alternatives were designed to achieve the best performance from each of the three basic physical approaches to addressing Bay-Delta system issues, and each alternative contains development of 4.7 million acre feet of additional storage capacity. The CALFED Program recognizes the potential for a broad range of benefits from properly designed and operated storage, as well as the negative and costly impacts of ill-advised storage. We will continue to evaluate viable storage sites through the summer.

We remain confident that with strong stakeholder involvement CALFED agencies will develop a balanced, long-term solution to the problems of ecosystem quality, water quality, water supply reliability, and levee system vulnerability affecting the Bay-Delta system. We also remain confident that implementation of this balanced, long-term solution will result in benefits for all of California. I look forward to discussing this matters with you in greater detail.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lester A. Snow', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Lester A. Snow
Executive Director

Enclosure

cc California Congressional Delegation
Governor Pete Wilson, State of California
Secretary Bruce Babbitt, Department of the Interior
Administrator Carol Browner, USEPA
Secretary of State Bill Jones, State of California